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AETA MEDIA RELEASE

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DEMONSTRATION TO MARK THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDONESIAN INVASION OF EAST TIMOR

Tomorrow, 7 December 1995 is the twentieth anniversary of the invasion of East Timor. The Australia-East Timor Association (AETA), CNRM (National Council of Maubere Resistance, and the East Timorese political parties, FRETILIN and UDT have organised a demonstration to mark the occasion. It will be held at the Indonesian Consulate at 72 Queens Rd (opposite the St Kilda end of Albert Park lake) at 12 noon.

Many members of Melbourne's East Timorese community will participate along with Australians who are concerned and angry over Indonesia's brutal occupation of the territory and the Australian government's collaboration with the the Suharto military dictatorship.

During the twenty years of Indonesian rule since 7 December 1975 more than 200,000 East Timorese have died. This is an appalling case of genocide in a country only 400 miles from our shores. The suffering continues. Life in East Timor today is almost unbearable because of the intense repression which is probably worse than that in Nazi-occupied Europe.

Health workers in Melbourne say it is difficult to treat new arrivals from East Timor because they are too scared to answer questions asked by people in authority. The whole population has been traumatised. Indonesians have taken their jobs and Timorese are outnumbered by Indonesians in their own capital, Dili. Every family has lost members as a result of the invasion.

Today we call on the Indonesian government to heed the growing outcry around the world and to negotiate with representatives of the East Timorese people under the auspices of the United Nations in order to find a peaceful solution to the issue. If peace settlements are can be found for the Middle East, Bosnia and Ireland it is surely possible to do likewise for East Timor. The Keating government should be actively trying to do just this. Public opinion in Australia is very concerned about the government's policy of appeasement. After twenty years of betrayal of the people of East Timor who made great sacrifices for Australia in World War 2 it is time for a change of heart by both major parties. On occasions such as this we should be conscious of the verdict of history rather than the economic greed which underlies Australian kowtowing to Indonesia.

For further information contact AETA Secretary John Sinnott on 9416 2960 (W) or 9489 7661 (AH).